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Meeting of the Post Directors to elect a Successor to Colonel Cowles; Charles Gardiner West's Sensible Remarks on Mr. Queed; Mr. West's Resignation from Old Blaines College, and New Consecration to the Uplift.

THE *Post* directors gathered in special meeting on Monday. Their first act was to adopt some beautiful resolutions, prepared by Charles Gardiner West, in memory of the editor who had served the paper so long and so well. Next they changed the organization of the staff, splitting the late Colonel's heavy duties in two, by creating the separate position of managing editor; this official to have complete authority over the news department of the paper, as the editor had over its editorial page. The directors named Evan Montague, the able city editor of the *Post*, to fill the new position, while promoting the strongest of the reporters to fill the city desk.

The chairman, Stewart Byrd, then announced that he was ready to receive nominations for, or hear discussion about, the editorship.

One of the directors, Mr. Hopkins, observed that, as he viewed it, the directors should not feel restricted to local timber in the choice of a successor to the Colonel. He said that the growing importance of the *Post* entitled it to an editor of the first ability, and that the directors should find such a one, whether in New York, or Boston, or San Francisco.

Another director, Mr. Boggs, remarked that it did not necessarily follow that a thoroughly suitable man must be a New York, Boston, or San Francisco man. Unless he was greatly deceived, there was an eminently suitable man, not merely in the city, but in the office of the *Post*, where, since

Colonel Cowles's death, he was doing fourteen hours of excellent work per day for the sum of fifteen hundred dollars per annum.

"Mr. Boggs's point," said Mr. Hickok, a third director, who looked something like James E. Winter, "is exceedingly well taken. A United States Senator from a Northern State is a guest in my house for Reunion week. The Senator reads the editorials in the *Post* with marked attention, has asked me the name of the writer, and has commended some of his utterances most highly. The Senator tells me that he never reads the editorials in his own paper — a Boston paper, Mr. Hopkins, by the bye — his reason being that they are never worth reading."

Mr. Shorter and Mr. Porter, fourth and fifth directors, were much struck with Mr. Hickok's statement. They averred that they had made a point of reading the *Post* editorials during the Colonel's absence, with a view to sizing up the assistant, and had been highly pleased with the character of his work.

Mr. Wilmerding, a sixth director, declared that the Colonel had, in recent months, more than once remarked to him that the young man was entirely qualified to be his successor. In fact, the Colonel had once said that he meant to retire before a great while, and, of course with the directors' approval, turn over the editorial helm to the assistant. Therefore, he, Mr. Wilmerding, had pleasure in nominating Mr. Queed for the position of editor of the *Post*.

Mr. Shorter and Mr. Porter said that they had pleasure in seconding this nomination.

Mr. Charles Gardiner West, a seventh director, was recognized for a few remarks. Mr. West expressed his intense gratification over what had been said in eulogy of Mr. Queed. This gratification, some might argue, was not wholly disinterested, since it was Mr. West who had discovered Mr. Queed and sent him to the *Post*. To praise the able editor was therefore to praise the alert, watchful, and discriminating director. (Smiles.) Seriously, Mr. Queed's

work, especially during the last few months, had been of the highest order, and Mr. West, having worked beside him more than once, ventured to say that he appreciated his valuable qualities better than any other director. If the Colonel had but lived a year or two longer, there could not, in his opinion, be the smallest question as to what step the honorable directors should now take. But as it was, Mr. West, as Mr. Queed's original sponsor on the *Post*, felt it his duty to call attention to two things. The first was the young man's extreme youth. The second was the fact that he was a stranger to the State, having lived there less than two years. At his present rate of progress, it was of course patent to any observer that he was a potential editor of the *Post*, and a great one. But might it not be, on the whole, desirable — Mr. West merely suggested the idea in the most tentative way, and wholly out of his sense of sponsorship for Mr. Queed — to give him a little longer chance to grow and broaden and learn, before throwing the highest responsibility and the final honors upon him?

Mr. West's graceful and sensible remarks made a distinct impression upon the directors, and Mr. Hopkins took occasion to say that it was precisely such thoughts as these that had led him to suggest looking abroad for a man. Mr. Shorter and Mr. Porter asserted that they would deprecate doing anything that Mr. West, with his closer knowledge of actual conditions, thought premature. Mr. Boggs admitted that the ability to write editorials of the first order was not all that should be required of the editor of the *Post*. It might be doubtful, thought he, whether so young a man could represent the *Post* properly on occasions of a semi-public nature, or in emergency situations such as occasionally arose in an editorial office.

Mr. Wilmerding inquired the young man's age, and upon being told that he was under twenty-six, remarked that only very exceptional abilities could counteract such youth as that.

"That," said Mr. Hickok, glancing cursorily at Charles

Gardiner West, "is exactly the sort of abilities Mr. Queed possesses."

Discussion flagged. The chairman asked if they were ready for a vote upon Mr. Queed.

"No, no — let's take our time," said Mr. Wilmerding. "Perhaps somebody has other nominations to offer."

No one seemed to have other nominations to offer. Some minutes were consumed by random suggestions and unprogressive recommendations. Busy directors began to look at their watches.

"Look here, Gard — I mean Mr. West," suddenly said young Theodore Fyne, the baby of the board. "Why could n't we persuade *you* to take the editorship? . . . Resign from the college, you know?"

"Now you *have* said something!" cried Mr. Hopkins, enthusiastically.

Mr. West, by a word and a gesture, indicated that the suggestion was preposterous and the conversation highly unwelcome.

But it was obvious that young Mr. Fyne's suggestion had caught the directors at sight. Mr. Shorter and Mr. Porter affirmed that they had not ventured to hope, etc., etc., but that if Mr. West could be induced to consider the position, no choice would appear to them so eminently — etc., etc. So said Mr. Boggs. So said Messrs. Hopkins, Fyne, and Wilmerding.

Mr. Hickok, the director who resembled James E. Winter, looked out of the window.

Mr. West, obviously restive under these tributes, was constrained to state his position more fully. For more than one reason which should be evident, he said, the mention of his name in this connection was most embarrassing and distasteful to him. While thanking the directors heartily for their evidences of good-will, he therefore begged them to desist, and proceed with the discussion of other candidates.

"In that case," said Mr. Hickok, "it appears to be the reluctant duty of the nominator to withdraw Mr. West's name."

But the brilliant young man's name, once thrown into the arena, could no more be withdrawn than the fisherman of legend could restore the genie to the bottle, or Pandora get her pretty gifts back into the box again. There was the idea, fairly out and vastly alluring. The kindly directors pressed it home. No doubt they, as well as Plonny Neal, appreciated that Blaines College did not give the young man a fair field for his talents; and certainly they knew with admiration the articles with which he sometimes adorned the columns of their paper. Of all the directors, they now pointed out, he had stood closest to Colonel Cowles, and was most familiar with the traditions and policies of the *Post*. Their urgings increased in force and persistence; perhaps they felt encouraged by a certain want of finality in the young man's tone; and at length West was compelled to make yet another statement.

He was, he explained, utterly disconcerted at the turn the discussion had taken, and found the situation so embarrassing that he must ask his friends, the directors, to extricate him from it at once. The editorship of the *Post* was an office which he, personally, had never aspired to, but it would be presumption for him to deny that he regarded it as a post which would reflect honor upon any one. He was willing to admit, in this confidential circle, moreover, that he had taken up college work chiefly with the ambition of assisting Blaines over a critical year or two in its history, and that, to put it only generally, he was not indefinitely bound to his present position. But under the present circumstances, as he said, he could not consent to any discussion of his name; and unless the directors would agree to drop him from further consideration, which he earnestly preferred, he must reluctantly suggest adjournment.

"An interregnum," said Mr. Hickok, looking out of the window, "is an unsatisfactory, not to say a dangerous thing. Would it not be better, since we are gathered for that purpose, to take decisive action to-day?"

"What is your pleasure, gentlemen?" inquired Chairman Byrd.

Mr. Hickok was easily overruled. The directors seized eagerly on Mr. West's suggestion. On motion of Mr. Hopkins, seconded by Mr. Shorter and Mr. Porter, the meeting stood adjourned to the third day following at noon.

On the second day following the *Post* carried the interesting announcement that Mr. West had resigned from the presidency of Blaines College, a bit of news which his friends read with sincere pleasure. The account of the occurrence gave one to understand that all Mr. West's well-known persuasiveness had been needed to force the trustees to accept his resignation. And when James E. Winter read this part of it, at his suburban breakfast, he first laughed, and then swore. The same issue of the *Post* carried an editorial, mentioning in rather a sketchy way the benefits Mr. West had conferred upon Blaines College, and paying a high and confident tribute to his qualities as a citizen. The young acting-editor, who never wrote what he did not think, had taken much pains with this editorial, especially the sketchy part. Of course the pestiferous *Chronicle* took an entirely different view of the situation. "The *Chronicle* has won its great fight," so it nervily said, "against classism in Blaines College." And it had the vicious taste to add: "Nothing in Mr. West's presidential life became him like the leaving of it."

On the third day the directors met again. With characteristic delicacy of feeling, West remained away from the meeting. However, Mr. Hopkins, who seemed to know what he was talking about, at once expressed his conviction that they might safely proceed to the business which had brought them together.

"Perceiving clearly that I represent a minority view," said Mr. Hickok, "I request the director who nominated Mr. Queed to withdraw his name. I think it proper that our action should be unanimous. But I will say, frankly, that if Mr. Queed's name remains before the board, I shall vote for him, since I consider him from every point of view the man for the position."

Mr. Queed's name having been duly withdrawn, the di-

rectors unanimously elected Charles Gardiner West to the editorship of the *Post*. By a special resolution introduced by Mr. Hopkins, they thanked Mr. Queed for his able conduct of the editorial page in the absence of the editor, and voted him an increased honorarium of eighteen hundred dollars a year.

The directors adjourned, and Mr. Hickok stalked out, looking more like James E. Winter than ever. The other directors, however, looked highly gratified at themselves. They went out heartily congratulating each other. By clever work they had secured for their paper the services of one of the ablest, most gifted, most polished and popular young men in the State. Nevertheless, though they never knew it, their action was decidedly displeasing to at least one faithful reader of the *Post*, to wit, Miss Charlotte Lee Weyland, of the Department of Charities. Sharlee felt strongly that Mr. Queed should have had the editorship, then and there. It might be said that she had trained him up for exactly that position. Of course, Mr. West, her very good friend, would make an editor of the first order. But, with all the flocks that roamed upon his horizon, ought he to have reached out and plucked the one ewe lamb of the poor assistant? Besides, she thought that Mr. West ought to have remained at Blaines College.

But how could she maintain this attitude of criticism when the new editor himself, bursting in upon her little parlor in a golden nimbus of optimism, radiant good humor and success, showed up the shallowness and the injustice of it?

"To have that college off my neck — Whew! I'm as happy, my friend, as a schoolboy on the first day of vacation. I have n't talked much about it to you," continued Mr. West, "for it's a bore to listen to other people's troubles — but that college had become a perfect old man of the sea! The relief is glorious! I'm bursting with energy and enthusiasm and big plans for the *Post*."

"And Mr. Queed?" said Sharlee. "Was he much disappointed?"

West was a little surprised at the question, but he gathered from her tone that she thought Mr. Queed had some right to be.

"Why, I think not," he answered, decisively. "Why in the world should he be? Of course it means only a delay of a year or two for him, at the most. I betray no confidence when I tell you that I do not expect to remain editor of the *Post* forever."

Sharlee appeared struck by this summary of the situation, which, to tell the truth, had never occurred to her. Therefore, West went on to sketch it more in detail to her.

"The last thing in the world that I would do," said he, "is to stand in that boy's light. My one wish is to push him to the front just as fast as he can stride. Why, I discovered Queed — you and I did, that is — and I think I may claim to have done something toward training him. To speak quite frankly, the situation was this: In spite of his great abilities, he is still very young and inexperienced. Give him a couple of years in which to grow and broaden and get his bearings more fully, and he will be the very best man in sight for the place. On the other hand, if he were thrust prematurely into great responsibility, he would be almost certain to make some serious error, some fatal break, which would impair his usefulness, and perhaps ruin it forever. Do you see my point? As his sponsor on the *Post*, it seemed to me unwise and unfair to expose him to the risks of forcing his pace. That's the whole story. I'm not the king at all. I'm only the regent during the king's minority."

Sharlee now saw how unjust she had been, to listen to the small whisper of doubt of West's entire magnanimity.

"You are much wiser and farther-sighted than I."

"Perish the thought!"

"I'm glad my little Doctor — only he is n't either little or very much of a doctor any more — has such a good friend at court."

"Nonsense. It was only what anybody who stopped to think a moment would have done."

"Not everybody who stops to think is so generous. . . ."

This thought, too, Mr. West abolished by 'a word.

"But you will like the work, won't you!" continued Sharlee, still self-reproachful. "I do hope you will."

"I shall like it immensely," said West, above pretending, as some regents would have done, that he was martyring himself for his friend, the king. "Where can you find any bigger or nobler work? At Blaines College of blessed memory, the best I could hope for was to reach and influence a handful of lumpish boys. How tremendously broader is the opportunity on the *Post!* Think of having a following of a hundred thousand readers a day! (You allow three or four readers to a copy, you know.) Think of talking every morning to such an audience as that, preaching progress and high ideals, courage and honesty and kindness and faith — moulding their opinions and beliefs, their ambitions, their very habits of thought, as I think they ought to be moulded. . . ."

He talked in about this vein till eleven o'clock, and Sharlee listened with sincere admiration. Nevertheless, he left her still troubled by a faint doubt as to how Mr. Queed himself felt about what had been done for his larger good. But when she next saw Queed, only a few days later, this doubt instantly dissolved and vanished. She had never seen him less inclined to indict the world and his fortune.

XXI

Queed sits on the Steps with Sharlee, and sees Some Old Soldiers go marching by.

FAR as the eye could see, either way, the street was two parallels of packed humanity. Both sidewalks, up and down, were loaded to capacity and spilling off surplus down the side-streets. Navigation was next to impossible; as for crossing you were a madman to think of such a thing. At the sidewalks' edge policemen patrolled up and down in the street with their incessant cry of "Back there!" — pausing now and then to dislodge small boys from trees, whither they had climbed at enormous peril to themselves and innocent by-standers. Bunting, flags, streamers were everywhere; now and then a floral arch bearing words of welcome spanned the roadway; circus day in a small town was not a dot upon the atmosphere of thrilled expectancy so all-pervasive here. It was, in fact, the crowning occasion of the Confederate Reunion, and the fading remnants of Lee's armies were about to pass in annual parade and review.

Mrs. Weyland's house stood full on the line of march. It was the house she had come to as a bride; she owned it; and because it could not easily be converted over her head into negotiable funds, it had escaped the predacious clutches of Henry G. Surface. After the crash, it would doubtless have been sensible to sell it and take something cheaper; but sentiment made her cling to this house, and her daughter, in time, went to work to uphold sentiment's hands. It was not a large house, or a fine one, but it did have a very comfortable little porch. To-day this porch was beautifully decorated, like the whole town, with the colors of two countries, one living and one dead; and the decorations for the dead were three times greater than the decorations for the